



Southland Economic Transformation (SET)

Final Narrative & Financial Report

Reporting Period: 10/1/20 - 10/30/21

Major Accomplishments

- **Secured & Renovated Culinary Incubator Located In Park Forest, IL**
- **Assisted 5 Direct Service Clients With Enhancing Business Functions**
- **100% Of Clients That Received Direct Services Secured Contracts & Expanded Distribution Efforts**
- **10 Potential Clients Were Referred To E-Commerce Program & 100% Of Referrals Completed Program**
- **Established 5+ Strategic Alliances To Enhance Sustainability Efforts**
- **Held 3 Taste Testing Events In South Suburb Area In Which 2,500+ Patrons Participated**

Grant Amount Allocated: \$49,500

Grant Amount Expended: \$49,500

Program Income Generated: \$5,600

Program Income Expended: \$3,387.69

Program Income Remaining for Sustainability Efforts: \$2,212.31

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Narrative Report

Overview

With the generous financial contribution of \$49,500 from the South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association (SSMMA) in addition to \$5,600 in program income, Poppin Plates Culinary Incubator has had the opportunity to acquire an additional 3,300 sq. ft. of property. This addition has allowed us to grow into a 4,336 sq. ft. Culinary Incubator. The grant funds have aided in the build out of the new space, including an additional ADA accessible restroom, two manufacturing kitchens, a taste testing area for potential clients, and a training room that also serves as a dining area which accommodates up to 90 customers.

Poppin Plates Culinary Incubator directly assisted five (5) minority-owned food and beverage manufacturing companies with launching and/or expanding their products throughout the Chicago South Suburban Region, City of Chicago and other Chicagoland areas. Also, one of the companies that we assisted is in the process of securing a nationwide distribution deal. Our company was able to indirectly assist ten (10) businesses by referring them to business development programs where 100% of the referred clients were able to successfully complete an entrepreneurial e-commerce course.

Most importantly, to further enhance sustainability efforts, our company established strategic alliances with the Illinois Small Business Development Center at SSEGI (SBDC), ARF Food Safety Consulting Group, and Davenport Community Development Corporation to assist direct service clients with enhancing their overall business processes. We were also able to create a workforce development training program, complete reporting requirements and identify additional funding sources/in-kind contributors.

Business Development & Enhancement Solution-based Training

Identified Need

Many small-to-mid size companies have expressed a dire need for hands-on approach training opportunities in addition to training webinars. After taking a few polls within the Poppin Plates Culinary Incubator we decided to create a solution-based entrepreneurial development program for catering and food and beverage processing companies in the midst of COVID-19.

Innovative Solution

As previously stated in the overview section of this report, Poppin Plates Culinary Incubator successfully established strategic alliances with business leaders located in the South Suburban region of Chicago as well as the City of Chicago and other Chicagoland areas. The Illinois SBDC at SSEGI, ARF Food Safety Consulting Group, and Davenport Community Development Corporation collaborated with our organization to enhance sustainability efforts from an administrative, financial and programmatic perspective.

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Collaborative Partnerships

The Illinois SBDC at SSEGI (SBDC), which is headed by Vicki Brown who has at least two (2) decades of experience in the area of assisting small-to-mid level businesses with bringing their entrepreneurial aspirations into fruition. SBDC worked with Poppin Plates to develop a best-practices based one-on-one entrepreneurial training program designed to meet the needs of minority-owned business entities. While collaborating with the SBDC, we were able to bring in several funding partners along with identifying funding opportunities at the local and state level.

ARF Food Safety Consulting Group (ARF) is led by Jasmine Murray, REHS (Registered Environmental Health Specialist). She is a well sought after expert that possesses twenty (20)+ years of experience in the food safety industry. ARF assisted our clients with enhancing their overall business operations to ensure that they were in compliance on a local, state and governmental level. ARF also provided individualized training sessions to clients that received direct services during this grant cycle.

Davenport Community Development Corporation is a 501c3 nonprofit that is led by David Davenport who possesses a combined twenty (20)+ years of experience in the areas of assisting churches, nonprofits and for profit business entities with developing innovative solutions designed to mitigate and eliminate obstacles that minorities face. DCDC assisted our company with developing a workforce and entrepreneurial program in addition to preparing our final SET narrative and financial report.

Feeding The Future Workforce Development & Entrepreneurship Program

The Feeding The Future Workforce Development & Entrepreneurship Program is based on the concept of providing participants with the resources and essential culinary arts and soft skills that are designed to assist them with excelling in the food service, manufacturing and information technology sector. After shopping this program with several different entities, the program was successfully selected during the University of Chicago's vetting process. The program is looking forward to taking on its first set of students in November 2021. We are in hopes of business entities located throughout the south suburban area adopting and funding the program in the immediate future.

Regulatory Compliance

Poppin Plates also had a chance to take advantage of regulatory compliance and best practices training sessions supplied by SBDC and ARF Food Safety Consulting Group which further assisted our organization with developing and pitching a workforce development training program to multiple corporate entities.

Due to regulatory compliance being a major issue that many small food and beverage manufacturers face, Poppin Plates was able to provide all five (5) direct service clients with technical assistance and training in understanding the importance of compliance standards for the following areas:

1. Federal, State & Local Regulations
2. Food & Drug Administration (FDA) Policies & Procedures
3. United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Requirements
4. Workforce Development & Fair Workplace Practices
5. Food Safety & Sanitation Quality Control
6. Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA) Regulations

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Food Processing, Manufacturing & Distribution Innovation Solutions & Success Stories

Through the collaborative efforts of our strategic alliance with our previously mentioned collaborative partners, we were able to ensure that clients received direct services related to understanding the importance of remaining in compliance and developing viable business plans/standard operating procedures. Through this strategic approach, direct service clients will continuously thrive within the marketplace.

Danie's Natural Juice Blends

www.daniesnaturaljuice.com

Danie's Natural Juice Blends (DNJB), specializes in inspiring, educating, and guiding their consumers on a journey to discovering healthier beverage alternatives while simultaneously providing customers with 100% All Natural Cold-Pressed Juices. DNJB educates consumers on the benefits and healing powers of juicing, vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, and immune boosting properties naturally found in juice. They also emphasize the importance of promoting cellular cleansing, cellular repair, building strength, and enhancing our overall mood. DNJB was able to expand from two (2) farmer's markets to a total of four (4) farmer's markets located in the City of Chicago. DNJB was able to launch an online store that has a prominent customer base in the south suburbs. Finally, Danie's Natural Juice Blends successfully secured a vendor's contract with the University of Chicago where she is located in six (6) different restaurants.

Cynergy Bakes LLC

www.cynergybakes.com

Cynergy Bakes LLC is a local gourmet cheesecake manufacturer that currently distributes their products throughout the Chicagoland area. CB produces high quality products by using the finest quality ingredients to continuously develop gourmet cheesecake products. Customers are able to take part in the "Cynergy Experience" that consists of the interaction of two desserts producing a combined effect greater than the sum of their separate effects with every bite. With the assistance of local chefs and restaurant owners, CB is able to continuously develop new flavors. Cynergy Bakes was able to successfully obtain a State of Illinois Wholesalers License which gives the company the opportunity to supply major grocery stores with her gourmet cheese cakes. Lastly, we were able to assist this company with launch their e-commerce platform.

Havana Coffee Lounge

www.havanacoffeelounge.com

Havana Coffee Lounge (HCL) specializes in manufacturing a variety of coffees, herbal teas, tea blends, desserts and pastries. Havana Coffee Lounge roasts, grinds and flavors our own coffee. Our batches are fresh and the flavors are unmatched. HCL also manufactures a variety of organic herbal teas and tea blends. Poppin Plates Culinary Incubator was able to assist HCL with identifying resources and securing relationships with investors which this company with the opportunity to gain access to and securing contracts with several businesses located throughout the Chicagoland area.

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The Favour Unit Corporation DBA Eggroll Etc.

www.eggrollsetc.com

The Favour Unit Corporation DBA Eggroll Etc. is a comfort food company that has a variety of eggrolls that allow customers to enjoy the ultimate Egg Rolls Etc. experience! They have products that include savory breakfast, lunch, dinner and dessert products. This company has current distribution deals within fifteen (15) food service outlets including restaurants and grocery stores located throughout the Chicagoland area. Also, Eggroll Etc. is in the process of securing a nationwide distribution deal. Egg Rolls Etc. was also featured on WGN-TV highlighting the company and the launch of its new cookbook.

Tasty Love Catering

www.tastylovec.com

Tasty Love Catering (TLC) is a soul food caterer that specializes in providing customers with an authentic southern hospitality experience. TLC creates everything from scratch and they provide customers with several options to choose from that have a touch of love in each and every bite. We were able to assist TLC with obtaining a contract with the Greater Chicago Food Depository with the assistance of the Illinois SBDC at SSEGI and the Southland Development Authority where TLC caters weekly meals for the staff until the end of the year.

Referrals

Poppin Plates was able to refer ten (10) potential clients to participate in an E-commerce training program that took place over the course of two months (August 2021- September 2021). We are proud to report that 100% of the clients successfully completed the program and some moved on to an advanced course in e-commerce which is currently taking place.

Taste Testing Events

Poppin Plates was able to facilitate two (2) taste testing events for The Favour Unit Corporation and Danie's Natural Juice Blends during our grand opening in March 2021 and during two additional events that took place in April & August 2021 at our Park Forest location. There were also six (6) additional vendors that participated in the August 2021 event to showcase their products. There were at least 2500 people in total that participated in the taste testing events.

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Poppin Plates Culinary Incubator Buildouts & Essential Purchases

Poppin Plates was able to expand and utilize the existing Poppin Plates Culinary Incubator Facility in Park Forest to develop a commercial incubator space for food and beverage product development and economic empowerment. The following buildout activities took place during the grant cycle:

Buildout

- Commercial Kitchen
- Training Room
- ADA Restroom
- Research & Development Taste Testing Lab
- Work Stations
- Public Space With Bar Area

Essential Equipment and Supplies Purchases

- Double Decker Oven
- Commercial Refrigerator
- Commercial Freezer

Challenges and Lessons Learned

The biggest challenge was securing licensed, bonded, and insured contractors that could work within our budget while providing high quality services. During the process of building out the facility, we came to the realization that building materials pricing soared due to Covid-19. This became a significant challenge with our original General Contractor due to our initial quote inflating exponentially to cover the increased cost of material. To remediate this unfortunate situation, we were able to locate additional contractors that could accommodate our needs at an affordable rate. The second major challenge faced was dealing with the government mandated shutdowns which significantly inhibited our ability to facilitate face-to-face training sessions due to continually changing COVID-19 restrictions. During this time, we were able to pivot from in-house face-to-face trainings to virtual training webinars until restrictions were lifted.

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Financial Report (Projected VS Actual Expenses)

| Revenue | |
|---|-----------------|
| SET Funds | \$49,500 |
| Program Income (Rent Paid By Direct Service Clients)* | \$5,600 |
| Total Revenue | \$55,100 |

| Expense | Projected Amount | Actual Expense | Funding Sources | | Justification |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------|--|
| | | | SET Funds | Program Income | |
| Culinary Incubator Lease | \$12,000.00 | \$12,235.72 | 9452.56 | \$2,783.16 | This amount included the required security deposit and monthly lease. |
| Renovation and Equipment | \$25,000.00 | \$40,047.44 | \$40,047.44 | | Costs for renovations and equipment purchases included the expenses associated with hiring general contractor for building out the commercial kitchen, updating restroom to meet ADA requirements, creating a research and development taste testing area, creating workstations and a public space with a bar area. Essential equipment and supplies purchased include a double decker oven, commercial fridge, commercial freezer, furniture for public space with open bar and essential material required for buildout efforts. This expense category also includes the costs of repairs and maintenance that took place during the grant funding cycle. |
| Business Development Consultant | \$4,500.00 | \$0.00 | | | Pro bono services were provided by all collaborative partners that contributed to assisting our direct service clients with enhancing their business functions and positioning them to compete on a local and nationwide level. |
| SBDC Staff time @10% | \$7,000.00 | \$0.00 | | | Due to additional expenses related to renovations, management team volunteered 100% of time and effort during grant cycle. |
| Outreach | \$1,000.00 | \$604.53 | | \$604.53 | In order to gain recognition in the Park Forest neighborhood, Poppin Plates secured graphic services from a provider that was able to transform our storefront windows into a marketing platform to better advertise the business. |
| Total Expenses | \$49,500.00 | \$52,887.69 | \$49,500.00 | \$3,387.69 | Due to additional renovations cost associated with this project as a result of COVID-19 the actual total expenses associated with implementing this project was \$52,887.69 instead of the amount of \$49,500.00 that was initially projected. |

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|--|-------------------|--|
| *Program Income Remaining Balance | \$2,212.31 | Remaining balance from program income will be utilized for sustainability efforts related to the continuation of activities associated with this project. |
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